

FAMILY AFFAIR

Adoption day makes new families official

BY MICHELLE PATRICK
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CENTREVILLE-It's rare when we hear about good news coming out of the courtroom, according to St. Joseph County Probate Judge Thomas Shumaker.

However, that wasn't the case Tuesday. The St. Joseph County Probate Court and Family Independence Agency came together to celebrate the first ever Michigan Adoption Day in the County Courts Building in Centreville. A handful of local families were brought together legally as their adoptions were finalized.

Probate Courtroom B was a full house for the event.

"A couple of months ago we didn't know if anyone would show up," Shumaker said. "Now more than 35 counties statewide are participating in the event."

According to statistics, there are approximately 542,000 children in foster care in the United States and 126,000 are waiting to be adopted.

"It's not just all statistics," Judge Shumaker said. "These are real children."

240 children in Michigan were given permanent homes Tuesday, including five children in St. Joseph County.

Judge Shumaker said he appreciated the variety of different families that were brought together in St. Joseph County Tuesday. Adoptive parents included a single female, single male and a Hispanic family.

"It isn't all just the Cleavers," Shumaker said. "I appreciate this county and its diversity."

Gustavo and Sandra Santana of Sturgis adopted not only one, but three children Tuesday. The Santanas already had two children of their own, Gustavo Jr. and Ericka, and have now adopted their niece and nephews Elizabet, Jesus and Fernando.

Letha Pernell adopted Rodney Deon Ford Green Tuesday. She had been involved with the boy as his foster parent since he was two weeks old.

The family, which also consists of son, Dylan, and daughter, Crishawna, resides in Colon.

Now single father Jeffrey Mallo of Constantine also adopted Da'Sha Tuesday as she took on the name Mallo.

"The excitement of these children today really invigorates the room," State Rep. Rick Shaffer said during a speech he gave at the event. "We need people who are willing to open their homes and their hearts to these children. Congratulations to the adoptive families today."

Michigan Adoption Day, which coincides with National Adoption Day, was chosen for two days before Thanksgiving to reinforce the fact that adoption families have so much to be thankful for.



Michelle Patrick/Sturgis Journal

These families were brought together in St. Joseph County Probate Court Tuesday in celebration of Michigan Adoption Day.